

HÄIKÖ, TARJA, 2007. *Barns estetiska lärnprocesser, Atelierista i förskola och skola (Children's aesthetic learning processes; Atelierista in pre-school school)*. With an English summary. Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Gothenburg Studies in Art and Architecture, nr 24, 368 sidor (pp) Göteborg ISBN 978-91-7346-599-1. ISSN 0348-4114.

The thesis consists of comparative and case studies in art education in Sweden, Italy and also Finland and is a study in visual culture at the Department of Art History and Visual Studies at Göteborg University. The main study is about the author's work in pre-school and elementary school as art pedagogue/atelierista and with tutoring as a pedagogical advisor/pedagogista. The author has documented her own work and gives examples of her thematic work in projects made together with pre-school teachers, teachers, cultural pedagogues and leisure pedagogues. Her work is inspired by the pedagogical philosophy of the pre-school Reggio Emilia in the North of Italy, the developer of the approach Loris Malaguzzi and atelierista Vea Vecchi's art work in ateliers. The explorative method used in the preschools integrates creative play, artistic activities, construction. The author describes the work with graphic languages, the use of generative questions and prediction of what step to take next in the work progress. The author describes the setting of the environments in activity zones, multi-sensorial and emotive spaces as well as the use of mirrors. The pre-school work is described by different kinds of documentation where picture series, observation schemas with photographs, written texts and key words are used as means to describe and analyse the children's learning strategies. The documentation is exposed through panels, publications and other digital material to parents, officials and the society. The main material for comparison in the thesis consists of observations and documentation made in the new pre-school districts of Bassa Reggiana and Terre dei Gonzaga to where the Reggio Emilia approach has been adopted. The atelier and atelierista can be considered as being symbols of the transformative work in the pre-schools.

The author defines her work as a methodology inspired by Lev Vygotsky in her use of his imitative and reproductive strategies where she used a co-constructive method based on the experiences of the children. In the work with tutoring she used a thematic form to analyse the pedagogical work, documentation and environments that is a combination of formal and intentional and content. In the art work two strategies is used in Reggio Emilia that can be characterised as mimetic and emancipatory. A constructivist synthesis is used as an adequate explanation of the polarity between different parts in the cognitive as well as the creative process of children. The author uses Vygotsky's construction of fantasy as a part of a model, where she claims the cognitive development and the construction of identity of the child to be inseparably interrelated. The model shows how these strategies support each other and generate new modes of expression. To this she has incorporated a theory of polarisation between impression and expression in the child's aesthetic process. Children's imitative strategies as well as the use of association, isomorphic perception and forming drawing schemas from memory are described. Tacit dimensions and endoconceptual knowledge is claimed to be an important part in children's learning processes and described in drawing and painting activities together with language development, early learning strategies in reading and writing as well as the development of mathematical concepts. The author states that aesthetic learning processes can create a visual in-depth understanding that is both cognitive and emotional and therefore creates meaningfulness in learning from different perspectives as semiotic, psychoanalytic and cognitive for the child. Art education is described both as a goal in itself and a method. The aesthetics have a cognitive and structuring function in the learning processes of the children that connect intermodally and multimodally. Primary aesthetic experiences are transformed into perceptive constancies that are categorised, and of which the child eventually acquires code knowledge. Pictures and mental images can be used as visual transitional objects in the pedagogical work. Aesthetic abilities and the use of mental schema can be progressed by training different ways of looking/seeing positions as well as by training children's knowledge of different materials and media. The use of pictures on different representative, conceptual and symbolic levels is expected to enhance development from concrete conceptual levels to more abstract levels of understanding.

KEYWORDS: aesthetic learning processes, art education, children, constructivism, creativity, fantasy, learning strategies, visuality, mental images, mental schemas, preschool, Reggio Emilia, Vygotsky

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